

John Harris.

8470

LETTERS

AND

SONNETS,

ON

MORAL

AND OTHER

INTERESTING SUBJECTS.

ADDRESSED TO

LORD JOHN RUSSEL.

By EDMUND CARTWRIGHT, D.D.

*Prebendary of Lincoln, and Chaplain to his Grace
the Duke of Bedford.*

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR LONGMAN, HURST, REES, AND ORME,
PATERNOSTER ROW.

1807.

PR
4452
C55L4

646357
23.11.56

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PREFACE.

THE following pages make part only of a correspondence, originating in some incidental circumstance no longer remembered. The writer's chief aim, at the commencement of it, was merely to divert and amuse his *very* young friend, by dwelling on such subjects only as were calculated for the meridian of a child's understanding. His letters were, of course, little better than a tissue of play-

ful or ludicrous ideas; though now and then sentiments of a different cast were occasionally interwoven, whose impression, he thought, might remain, after the mirth, which it had been his object to excite, was forgotten.

But he soon perceived that the mental digestion of his infantine correspondent was competent to more solid and nutritious aliment than any thing he had yet supplied him with; and that, if he wished to gratify his literary appetite to much further extent, he must vary his entertainment. With this view he began the series of Letters and Sonnets, which make the present volume.

The writer's inducement for blending verse with his prose was in conformity with the known predilection of his noble correspondent for poetical composition, in which his Lordship has already given, considering the early period at which his productions have been written, signal indications of future excellence.

As the topics which are touched upon in these letters are, in general, of that nature which cannot fail to be interesting, if not to those of the same age, yet, to such at least as have made the same proficiency as his Lordship, the author has been induced to submit them to the public. And in doing this, he has been

influenced not so much by his own partiality, or that of his literary friends, as by the particular pleasure which, he has reason to believe, his correspondence has afforded to the amiable and ingenuous youth to whom it has been addressed. This he considers as no inconclusive testimony that his book may afford equal pleasure to others of the same amiable and ingenuous disposition, and whose intelligent minds have had the advantage of due cultivation.

It may be needless to observe, that the limited nature of an epistolary correspondence admits not, in the compass of a short letter, of treating at large a

variety of subjects, every one of which would require a volume ; and on which, indeed, volumes have already been written. The writer's object, therefore, was not to instruct by formal deduction of argument, but merely to throw out hints and ideas, rather as matters of exercise than information ; such as might excite, at least, if not gratify curiosity. The reader is apprised, therefore, that he must not promise himself, from the ensuing pages, a substantial repast : a slight entertainment is all that he is to look for : and yet, should the seeds of moral instruction, which it has been the writer's endeavour to drop, as it were, into the youthful mind, take root and come to

maturity, they cannot fail to reward the cultivation that may be bestowed upon them, by something more than a mere temporary gratification.

LETTER I.

My dear Lord,

THE playful style in which we have hitherto corresponded would but ill accord with that gravity of character which in our present stages of life it is now incumbent upon us to assume. I, my Lord, have completed my grand climacterical year; and your Lordship is actually entered into your teens! Let us then lay aside our quips and our quiddities, and start some serious subject of correspondence. With

regard to myself, I have made my determination, which is, to address to your Lordship a series of Sonnets, chiefly on the moral duties, the passions, and affections.

In many of these compositions there will be, of course, a great deal of good advice. In bestowing it upon your Lordship I am sensible that I am only following the example of the rest of mankind, who are generally most liberal of their benefactions to those who least want them.

The Sonnet, as your Lordship well knows, is a short poem, containing only fourteen lines; a species of composition admirably suited to the resources of a superannuated poet, whose brains will not bear more than

fourteen strokes of the poetical pump, before the reservoir is exhausted.

It will frequently happen, from the unavoidable compression of the subject, that in these intended sonnets "more will be meant than meets the ear." In such cases it will be necessary that they should be accompanied with a short comment. And it will still more frequently happen, it is to be feared, that the reader, a superficial one of course, may think them unmeaning and dull. But your Lordship's good-nature must here interfere, and tax your sagacity to find out, that the greater the apparent dullness of any particular passage, the more profound is the author's meaning; and that should he even be thought now and then unintelligible, it is only in imitation of his

neighbours the Sphinxes, whose character it is to be ænigmatically obscure.

Here follows the first sonnet, which is merely an inscriptive prelude to the rest.

SONNET I.

SICK of the world, that I have served too long,
Its hollow friendships, its insidious wiles,
Its measured kindness, its capricious smiles,
To thee, dear youth, I give my future song!
To thee, whose heart, in native virtue strong,
The world has yet no part in, nor defiles,
Nor yet with low-bred cozenage, beguiles
Thy artless mind, confounding right with wrong.
O may thy heart, as years the man proclaim,
Retain the glow of virtue's purest flame!
Borne on the Passions' regulated tide,
That ebbs or flows as Reason's dictates guide,
May peace within that still-untroubled breast
Build in security her halcyon nest!



LETTER II.

My dear Lord,

YOUR Lordship's very friendly call and enquiries after me this morning, when I was confined to my chamber, have suggested to me the propriety of commencing my series of sonnets with the one on Friendship which I now send, and which I have just written.

"Idem velle atque nolle," is stated as an indispensable law of true friendship.—

But if merely to have the same aversions and desires is to regulate our choice in the selection of friends, what probability is there of an intimate and lasting friendship subsisting between your Lordship and me, the objects of whose desires and aversions, it may be supposed, are as far asunder as our ages, youth and age rarely agreeing in the same thing? But, perhaps, our ages, in what respects the intimacies of friendship, are not so far asunder as may be imagined. Your Lordship,

Ante annos animumque gerens curamque virilem,

Anticipating manhood's thought and mind,—

is no longer to be considered as a boy; your understanding, then, being of age, you are now, in fact, a young man. And,

with respect to myself, as the mind ought never to be considered as old, till it becomes petulant and peevish, and out of humour with the innocent pleasures of youth, I am willing to hope that, if not absolutely a young man, I may be still looked upon as not past the prime of life.

You see then, my dear friend, that whatever disparity there may be in our ages by one mode of calculation, there is none of any moment in calculating by another. The disparity may, probably, be still less in our aversions and desires; in those, I mean, whose operation ought to have an influence in cementing friendship: yours are instinctively directed to their proper objects; and mine either have, or ought to have, the same direction.

There is, at all events, one criterion of friendship in which, I trust, we mutually agree—the wish to promote each other's happiness. Mine you essentially promote by the daily progress you are making in learning and virtue; and it shall be my endeavour, at least, to promote yours, by facilitating, as far as I am able, your progress in pursuits so laudable.

It does not occur to me that any part of the following sonnet requires a comment or explanation, except that where I speak of despising the friendships of the mean, I do not apply the term to persons of mean condition, with whom your Lordship is not likely to have that intimacy which may terminate in friendship. The friendships I would caution your Lordship against, are

with those whose sentiments are mean and grovelling, and unworthy their rank and station. Persons also of weak and uncultivated minds ought to be uncommonly good in their dispositions to be entitled to your friendship.

Friendship, to be a source of rational gratification, must be confined to the wise and good; to such, in short, as I trust your Lordship will always be.

I am,

My dear Lord; &c.

SONNET II.

FRIENDSHIP.

OF genuine FRIENDSHIP this th' unvarying test ;
She soothes our sorrows, she divides our cares,
Yet multiplies the pleasure that she shares,
And gives to all our joys a finer zest.
With youth and health, and fame and fortune blest,
What state with his in wretchedness compares,
Whose selfish heart no place for friendship spares?
A void how dreary his unsocial breast !
On friends, selected from the good and wise,
How much the colour of our life depends !

The mean, the vicious, and the vain despise—

These are united but for private ends ;

These, tho' connected with the closest ties,

Confederates may be, but not true friends.



LETTER III.

My dear Lord,

THE subject of the sonnet which I now send is one of the cardinal virtues, which are Justice, Prudence, Temperance, and Fortitude. They are so called from the Latin word *Cardo*, a hinge, implying that on these virtues all the rest turn.

To you, my dear Lord, who at the present period of your life, and for some years to

come, can form no judgment experimentally either of prosperity or adversity, it will probably seem a paradoxical assertion to affirm that greater fortitude is required to resist the blandishments of prosperity, and their seductive influence on our minds, than to bear up against the strokes of adversity. But nothing is more true ; few men whose minds have not been greatly enervated, but are able to bear up in some degree or other against adversity. Adversity awakens our virtues, and forces the energies of our minds into action. Prosperity, on the contrary, has a tendency to debilitate our minds, and to undermine our virtues. She has also a wonderful effect sometimes even on our eye-sight and memory, of which I could from my own experience furnish more than one laughable instance. But

it is not to be wondered at that sudden prosperity and elevation should make a man sometimes overlook or forget his most intimate friends, when it so frequently happens that it makes him forget even himself.

As dangerous a companion as prosperity is to the generality of mankind, I shall however devoutly pray that she may attend your Lordship through life; and yet I should not be your friend in thus wishing your virtue to be put to the severest of all trials, were I not confident that she would come off victoriously.

I am, &c.

SONNET III.

FORTITUDE.

'TIS not alone in the ensanguined field,
 Where death and danger share the dubious hour,
 That FORTITUDE exerts her greatest power,
 And bids us neither to submit nor yield.
 Dire foes there are, both open and conceal'd,
 Who o'er the moral field incessant scour,
 At peace and virtue aim their arrowy shower—
 'Gainst these true Fortitude our safest shield!
 With patient firmness who sustains his part,
 When stern Adversity assails the heart,

The man thus tried, as heathen sages write,
The Gods themselves look down on with delight.
Yet more severely tried in virtue's race,
The few who bear Prosperity with grace !



LETTER IV.



A CIRCUMSTANCE, which came to my knowledge only a few days ago, gave occasion to the sonnet which I now enclose.

There is scarcely any thing so detestable as that malignity of temper which seeks its systematic gratification in the doing unprovoked injury to others. This temper, as it makes no part of your Lordship's composition, and as you cannot yet have experi-

enced its effects from others, your Lordship will scarcely believe to be half so prevalent as in your subsequent life, I am afraid, you will find it.

Malignity is a passion confined neither to sex nor age; and it is to be met with in every rank and class of society. The idle and the narrow-minded, whatever may be their station, are most subject to its influence. It may be laid down as an axiom, that malignity of disposition (to express myself mathematically, a mode of expression which by this time, I presume, your Lordship is acquainted with) is always in an inverse ratio to greatness of mind. A man of a truly great mind is utterly incapable of the sensation. His views are naturally directed to the benefitting of man-

kind, and on his exertions for the enlargement of human happiness he calculates for his own. But with objects and pursuits of this kind, the indulgence of a malignant disposition is incompatible. To illustrate the observation by examples—Let us take those two illustrious friends, the late Duke of Bedford and Mr. Fox. As men of truly great minds, who have been their competitors in modern times? And were not their characters as much distinguished by their benevolence and philanthropy, as by their other extraordinary qualities and endowments? It is not necessary, however, to have minds on the same scale with theirs to be superior to the influence of this degrading passion. It is, in truth, only into little minds, of which, indeed, it is one criterion, that it ever gains admission. Your Lord-

ship, perhaps, will tell me, that you could name several great men, whose actions on variety of occasions indicated uncommon malignity.—True : art and cultivation, in concurrence with particular circumstances, have made many a man *great*, whose mind was naturally *little*, and which continued so to the last ; though the multitude, deceived by their self-confidence and arrogant presumption, might think otherwise.

Malignity is, of all diseases of the mind, the most incurable. It invariably originates in selfishness which nothing can root out. Persons of this disposition consider the gratifications of others as so much withheld from the mass of their own enjoyments, even though the gratifications may arise from sources of pleasure which they do not value

nor comprehend. Thus persons of talents and virtue are certain objects of their malignant envy; not that they envy them their virtues or their talents; for the one, if they pleased, they might possess, and the other, not knowing their value, they despise. No: it is the internal satisfaction, arising from the exercise of these possessions, and the esteem of the world which they procure, that excite their indignation. Like those characters whom SALLUST makes MARIUS describe, as expecting to combine the rewards of industry with the pleasures of idleness, they fancy themselves intitled to enjoy the serenity of virtue and the gratifying sensations arising from the exercise of useful talents, with the torpor of ignorance and the indulgence of vice.

As the malignant are neither to be conciliated by kindness, nor softened even by submission, a prudent man will not only decline an intimacy with them, but will shun them as a pestilence.

The Boa Upas tree, besides being to be met with in Java, is found also in Sumatra, Borneo, Celebes, and probably in most of the other adjacent islands. It is easily distinguished at a considerable distance, being always solitary. The soil around it, for the space (as my author informs me) of a stone's cast, is barren, and appears as though it were burnt up. The inspissated juice of this tree is made use of by the natives to poison their arrows. The facts which I have alluded to in the sonnet are, there is every reason to believe, strictly true.

The fabulous account which is given of this singular tree, the assassin, if I may so call it, of the vegetable kingdom, by N. P. FOERSCH, a surgeon in the service of the Dutch East India Company, is little better than an Arabian tale; and yet this inventive Dutchman has the modesty to affirm, that of most of the circumstances which he relates he was an eye-witness!

SONNET IV.

MALIGNITY.

IN JAVA'S isle the BOA UPAS grows,
 Amid whose boughs no bird melodious sings,
 Beneath whose baleful shade no flow'ret springs,
 Nor tenant of the forest seeks repose.
 Soon shall the hand of death their eye-lids close,
 O'er whom that lurid tree its foliage flings;
 Tainting with poisonous breath the zephyr's
 wings,
 From every leaf such dire contagion flows!

So flows the gall of a malignant heart—

The noisome current knows no ebbing tide;

Its daily waste as daily is supplied,

Still it flows on, its venom to impart.

Worth, learning, virtue, feel its blighting force—

Ah, where the power that shall retard its course!



LETTER V.

TO THE MARQUISS OF TAVISTOCK.

My dear Marquiss,

I WILL thank your Lordship to tell my friend, Lord JOHN RUSSEL, that there is nearly as much malignity (a subject on which I have written to him not many posts ago) in withholding pleasure as in inflicting pain; and that if he does not very soon let me have the gratification of hearing from him, I shall conclude his Lordship has completely cast me off, and shall henceforth set

him down amongst the most incorrigible of the malignants.

The morning being too frosty to venture out on horseback, I walked up to the Abbey, where I paid a visit to Mr. Fox and his compatriots in the Temple. The expected accession to the group, which we are waiting for with impatience, brought ideas into my mind which I have endeavoured to express in the following sonnet. Though it is immediately addressed to your Lordship, yet, I trust, that it will, in due time, apply to the whole house of Russel, from your Lordship down to the little embryo admiral, Lord Edward.

I have the honour to be, &c.

SONNET V.

WRITTEN IN THE TEMPLE OF LIBERTY
AT WOBURN ABBEY.

To the Marquiss of Tavistock.

HERE in the centre, where the patriot band
In sculptured forms this fane of freedom grace,
The noble founder's image shall have place,
And here, in breathing marble, BEDFORD stand.
Th' expected statue from CANOVA's hand,
Whose chissel, faithful to his art, can trace
The outward lineaments of form and face,
Our wondering admiration may command.

What more can Art? In you we look to find,
In full display, and at no distant term,
His nobler part, his virtues and his mind.
Serene, humane, intelligent, and firm,
Like his your aim to benefit mankind!
The future plant who sees not in the germ?

SONNET VI.

TO THE SAME, WITH A HORSE.

PROUD of his burden, CHIRON pranced along,
 The young ACHILLES mounted on his back;
 Quitting the common road and beaten track,
 He ranged at large thro' fields renown'd in song.
 In glory's path, with step sublime and strong,
 He bore his pupil on to Fame's attack,
 Nor ever once would deign his pace to slack,
 Till he had distanced the ignoble throng.
 An humbler office far, my valued friend,
 Awaits the Demi-CHIRON that I send.

Let others bear you on in glory's race,
He only asks to bear you in the chace;
To leave behind the NIMRODS of the day,
And win from rival steeds the palm away

LETTER VI.

My dear Lord John,

I HAVE been anxiously waiting for several posts in the hope of hearing from you. But I suppose your Lordship is at present so occupied in the pursuit of pleasure as to have no moments to spare for any other purpose. Under this persuasion I have written the following sonnet, by which your Lordship will perceive that I am as great an advocate for pleasure as the youngest of her votaries can be. Indeed, I am of opinion that

pleasure was originally intended to be the principal occupation of our lives; and it could not fail to be so now, were it not in a great degree owing to our many misconceptions of the subject, and the mistakes which, in consequence of those misconceptions, we are perpetually falling into. Your Lordship's good sense and good disposition will, I trust, direct you in acquiring early habits of distinguishing between the sources of real and apparent pleasure, and of course, will enable you to avoid the errors by which young men, on their entrance into life, are too apt to be misled. Of all the precepts of happiness, of which I have had experience, this is the principal.—If you wish to enjoy pleasure, never be without employment; as nothing is more certain than that they enjoy the most

pleasure, who, *cæteris paribus*, are the most employed. If, therefore, my dear Lord, you regard your comfort and happiness, let neither your mind nor body be without their due share of action in some useful, or at least innocent, employment.

SONNET VII.

PLEASURE.

“ON PLEASURE’s dimpling cheek the smile how
sweet!

“How sweet her syren voice’s varied powers!

“E’en now she calls me to those blissful bowers,

“Whose path, with flowery tread, invites my feet!

“Why from those blissful bowers should I retreat,

“Or quit the path that Pleasure strews with
flowers?

“Why not to Pleasure give my youthful hours,

“That, once gone by, no more their course repeat?”

True, my young friend, embrace the present joy,
Pleasure to chace your object and employ.

Yet Prudence whispers, and attend her voice—
In chusing Pleasure make no grovelling choice ;
Select the noblest ; nobler can you find
Than in the virtuous exercise of mind?



LETTER VII.

NOT having written any thing for some days past immediately addressed to your Lordship, nor having any thing by me in any way applicable to your Lordship's period of life, I send, rather than send you nothing, a few lines applicable to my own.

Fifty years hence the world will, I trust, have your Lordship's climacterical thoughts, which, whether expressed in verse or prose, will, I equally trust, be in every sense of the words, much brighter than mine.

CLIMACTERIC THOUGHTS.

Now three-score years and three have pass'd away,
And time and care have turn'd these locks to grey;
Old age and death, with slow yet certain pace,
Creep on to terminate my mortal race;
And lo! to make their visits more severe,
What horrid phantoms in their train appear!
What dire diseases press upon the view,
Of every shapeless form and squalid hue!
See FEVER, gasping with volcanic breath,
And AGUE, colder than the hand of death!
Eroding CANCER, that evades the light,
And DOTAGE, drivelling on in mental night!

With agonizing throes see PIRENZY rave,
 And DROPSY, struggling in a watery grave!
 Her helpless victim, stretched upon the rack,
 With ruthless blade see GOUT prepares th' attack!
 To every vital part she turns the point,
 And drives a fiery wedge thro' every joint.
 Last, in the gloomy rear, see PALS Y stand,
 With trembling grasp to shake life's lingering sand!
 All these and more, alas ! too well I see
 On human life attend by Heaven's decree.
 May, then, that Heaven, to whose decrees I kneel,
 Teach me to bear what all are born to feel ;
 Give me, as hitherto thro' trials past,
 A patient mind, unshaken to the last !

P. S. That my letter may not go without the usual accompaniment, I add a sonnet which I have just now received. It is from the same pen which produced the farewell to W——. It was occasioned by the death of a school fellow, who expired almost in the very act of singing in a circle of her companions.

SONNET VIII.

THE SKY-LARK.

SWEET bird! more welcome to my pensive heart

Thy untaught melody, distinct and clear,

As from aloft it vibrates on my ear,

Than all the studied sounds of boastful art!

Thy sprightly strain continue to impart,

Sweet bird of morn, my pensive heart to cheer!

Alas! thy sprightly strain no more I hear,

To heaven's gate now soaring as thou art!

Nor yet thy vanish'd form can I discern,—

Too faithful emblem of the friend I mourn!

Like thine, the native wild notes that she sung—

To these what fascinating charms were given!

But while in air the quivering accents hung,

Like thee, the sainted warbler flew to heaven!

LETTER VIII.

My dear Lord John,

SCARCELY had I dispatched my last letter to the post when I felt dissatisfied with myself in not having sent to your Lordship something that might be more congenial with your own feelings than the sombre thoughts of a grand climacteric. I immediately, therefore, took up my pen and wrote the following sonnet.

I have chosen Prudence for my subject,
not because I can suppose that you are ever

likely to be imprudent, but because your Lordship is fast approaching to that period of life when her guidance will be most wanted.

There are those who will scarcely admit Prudence amongst the virtues; or if they do, they consider her but as a sneaking virtue at the best. Such are FIELDING, STERNE, CHURCHIL, and other loose moralists of their respective schools. Their misrepresentation, indeed, arises from their considering the subject merely in its popular economical sense. Even in this sense she is a virtue of much greater consequence than they are willing to admit. Viewed in her moral character, as regulating the passions and affections, and as giving their proper direction to the energies of the mind, and the operations

of intellect, Prudence may justly rank, if not with the most dignified and splendid of the virtues, at least with the most important. Hence the school-divines, in conformity with the sentiments of the most respectable of the ancient philosophers, have classed Prudence amongst the cardinal virtues. The ancients, indeed, (according to the popular reading of a line in Juvenal) esteemed her, if not one of their divinities, a substitute for them all.

Nullum Numen abest si sit Prudentia.

SONNET IX.

PRUDENCE.

HER rudder lost, the sport of wind and tide,
In vain the gallant vessel courts the gale;
Her fate the heart-struck mariners bewail,
No longer able now her course to guide!
Far from her destined port now wandering wide,
To shun the threatening rocks, ah, what avail
Th' unerring Needle, or the swelling sail?
Her country's sorrow now, as once her pride!
Thus fares it in life's voyage. At the helm

If PRUDENCE sit not to direct her course,
Soon shall the storm th' unsteady bark o'erwhelm,
Unable to resist the tempest's force.

How changed her happier lot when Prudence
steers!

Secure she sails along, nor rocks nor tempest
fears.



LETTER IX.



YOUR Lordship is not aware how happy your letter, which I received this morning, has made me. From your long silence I had begun to fear that I had been forgotten. You have, however, remembered me at last, and in the most agreeable way; in the first place, by writing to me a long and entertaining letter; and in the next place, by making that letter the vehicle of a very elegant son-

net, which I have repeatedly read over with singular pleasure. With very little polishing, which you can easily give it, it would do credit to the best sonneteer of us all. Your Lordship has hit off the true style and character of this species of composition as happily in this your first attempt, as you could have done, had you written as many sonnets as PETRARCH. I much doubt, whether at your Lordship's time of life he ever wrote one half so good. Of this I am certain, that in natural feeling, and in simplicity of sentiment and construction, your sonnet will not be easily excelled.

I have taken the liberty of disobeying for the present your injunction to put it, as soon as I had perused it, into the fire. If, however, I shall not be able to obtain a re-

prieve for it, it shall be committed, when I receive a second order for its execution, to the flames, though *non sine lacrymis*. If your Lordship will have the goodness to permit me to preserve it, I religiously promise not to suffer it to be copied.

So well apprised am I of your Lordship's diffidence, that, in spite of the good opinion which, I am persuaded, you have every reason to entertain of my sincerity, you will be apt to suspect me, in what I have said about your sonnet, of flattery. But were I thus disposed to act in repugnance to my own nature, I must forget the nature of the climate where you now are, in which, it is said, no venomous reptile can exist, to think of sending there such a venomous reptile as Flattery. But flattery

sometimes conceals its reptility, and then, perhaps, may be met with even in IRELAND, under the concealed character which gives title to the following sonnet.

SONNET X.

THE MAGICIAN.

THE tales, that once were held devoutly true,
 Of magic spells and necromantic skill
 You disbelieve? Then disbelieve them still—
 Your incredulity you soon may rue!
 A sly Magician daily may you view
 Received with welcome, enter where he will.
 Let but his tongue its oily drops distil,
 His hearers take all shapes, or strange or new.
 He makes deformity all hearts engage,
 He gives to youth th' experience of old age;

For him decrepitude resigns her crutch—

I too am ten years younger at his touch.

Who, you will say, can this inchanter be?

What think you, my young friend, of FLATTERY?

LETTER X.

My dear Lord John,

NOT many days ago I was invited by a friend to meet two literary gentlemen of his acquaintance, with whom, being men of agreeable manners, as well as of great wit and information, I had flattered myself that I should have spent a very delightful evening, enjoying, to express myself in the words of the poet, that most refined of all gratifications,

“The feast of reason and the flow of soul.”

Unfortunately, a noisy boisterous block-head, to say no worse of him, unexpectedly broke in upon us, and so completely interrupted the current of our conversation, as totally to defeat my friend's intention in bringing us together. This incident gave birth to the following sonnet.

It has been debated amongst philosophers, whether the faculty of interchanging our sentiments by means of oral communication be a gift immediately from heaven, or an acquired habit, the result of chance and necessity. The theories which have been advanced, particularly by those who maintain the latter opinion are, some of them at least, highly fanciful and ridiculous. As it might have a tendency to make your Lordship out of love with even wisdom her-

self, were you, in the outset of your pursuit of her, to be made acquainted with all the fooleries which wise men will sometimes give into, I shall pass over their whimsical arguments to prove that beasts were the original language-masters of the human race. If there is any one property of our nature, more than another, which can be attributed to a divine origin, it is surely the divine property of speech.

SONNET XII.

CONVERSATION.

CONVERSE, the privilege of human kind,
From heaven came down life's journey to be-
guile—

How sweet the solace in her varied style
That Love and Friendship and Affection find!
They best maintain this commerce of the mind,
Who win the Graces to attend the while,
And Modesty, with her restrictive smile,
And wit and humour, chastened and refined.

But should licentious merriment intrude,
(A satyr coarse, indelicate, and rude)
The bashful Graces shall at once retire,
Wit shall be dumb, and Modesty expire ;
On the cold cheek her last warm blush shall glow,
A winter rose, now withering in the snow !



LETTER XI.

I HAVE often wondered, my dear Lord, that gratitude should be so rare amongst mankind, there being scarcely any sensation which seems to be more in harmony with the feelings that are excited by those first movers of human action, vanity and self-love. To have favours conferred upon us, by those from whom we have no right to expect them, may certainly be considered as a compliment to our merit, with which our

vanity, it might rationally be supposed, could not fail to be gratified, and would feel a pride in proclaiming. But it unfortunately happens that this very sentiment, which ought to awaken our gratitude, is too frequently the means of stifling it. Instead of considering the kindnesses which are thus shewn us as a voluntary gift, the spontaneous effusions of a generous mind, we are too apt to demand them as a right; and, therefore, look upon ourselves as having fully discharged, if not more than repaid the obligation, by barely condescending to acknowledge it.

As an instance of repaying a debt of perpetual gratitude “by weight and tale,” take the following anecdote. A person in possession of a property, worth at least

150,000*l.* died, and left it in such a way as, in the opinion of some of the ablest lawyers, totally excluded the heir at law. It happened that the heir at law had a friend, a young barrister; who being much hurt at the circumstances of the case, and stimulated by his friendship for the party, turned over in his mind every possible means of defeating the injustice, as he then thought it, of the testator's will, and bringing back the property into the legal channel. By indefatigable application to the subject in all its different bearings, he at length devised a method by which, to the most agreeable surprise and unspeakable astonishment of his client, he recovered the whole sum! his client, of course, was overwhelmed with gratitude, and being impatient to repay him for the services that had been rendered,

desired him *to make out his bill*. You may guess the gentleman's surprise at the request, it not being customary for barristers to make out bills. But as in the course of the business he had disbursed some small sums, he made out a bill of them, amounting to 21*l.* 17*s.* 3*d.* which his client most generously paid him, without overhauling a single item, or deducting even the odd three-pence for prompt payment.

SONNET XII.

GRATITUDE.

THE slightest word or look that means us kind,
 From those to whose regards we lay no claim,
 Sends a vibration thro' our inmost frame
 Of pure delight, from selfish joy refined.
 O lost to genuine joy, O base and blind,
 Whose hearts the ties of GRATITUDE disclaim!
 Who spurn the precious load, or feel it shame,
 A debt from pride, debasing to the mind!
 What warm sensations fill the grateful breast!
 It feels thro' each responsive nerve prevail

Dilating fires, that scorn to be compress'd!
The Gratitude that works by rule and scale
Is but a trading virtue at the best,
That pays a lasting debt by weight and tale.

LETTER XII.

My dear Lord John,

THERE cannot well be a more hackneyed subject than that which I have chosen for the sonnet which your Lordship will now receive. And how, indeed, should it be otherwise? Hope is our constant and familiar companion through life, from the first dawn of reason to its final extinction in death, or mental imbecillity. She is, if not our best, certainly our dearest friend. Her voice is always either cheerful, soothing, or

consolatory. Even when she most egregiously deceives us, she is never without something to propose, which shall rectify her error, or repay us with interest for our disappointment. It is, however, in a great degree our own fault if she deceives us to the injury of our peace. Whenever we suffer unreasonable vanity or ambition, or any unruly or vicious passion to point out the objects she is to pursue, we may be certain that the severity of our disappointment, whether she be successful in the pursuit or not, will be exactly in proportion to the impetuosity or irregularity of the particular passion by which she was influenced. I recollect a passage in a juvenile publication of mine, in which this sentiment is thus expressed. But first let me apologize for the egotism of quoting from myself.

See, led by Hope the youthful train !

Her fairy dreams their hearts have won ;

She points to what they ne'er shall gain,

Or dearly gain——to be undone!

ARMENIA and ELVIRA,

a Legendary Tale.

Man is so constituted (and I cannot comprehend how any created being, endued with intelligence, can be otherwise) as that hope must be indispensibly necessary to his intellectual existence. Time, the measure of existence, is composed of the past, the present, and the future. Of these, the present is the least part. In fact, it is little more than an imaginary point, the point of contact where the past and the future meet. Were the past to be totally obliterated from our recollection, what enjoyment could we

have in the present, or how could we be able to look forward to the future? And again: were we unable to look forward to the future, all recollection of the past, or perception of the present, would be useless. We should be in a state of apathy, seated on a precipice (in Paradise, if you please) with unresting eyes directed towards endless vacuity. From this state of apathy, however, we are relieved by the intellectual faculty, which Providence has kindly bestowed upon us, of contemplating, chiefly through the medium of hope, the prospect of our future destiny, or rather, what we wish to be. It is this pre-enjoyment of the future which makes the principal part of human happiness.

I am not certain, my young friend, whe-

ther the manner in which I have now expressed myself be perfectly intelligible to you. It will, however, be no unprofitable exercise of your understanding to endeavour to make out my meaning; unless, indeed, it should prove in the discovery only as “two grains of wheat in a bushel of chaff.”

I call the passion-flower the mystic flower, from the symbolical representation which, according to the fanciful superstition of the person who first named it, it is supposed to exhibit of our Saviour's Passion, and some of the mysteries of the Christian Religion. I am, my dear Lord,

Your very faithful

and affectionate Friend, &c.

SONNET XIII.

HOPE.

YON mystic flower, with gold and azure bright,
Whose stem luxuriant speaks a vigorous root,
Unfolds her blossoms to the morn's salute,
That close and die in the embrace of night.
No luscious fruits' the cheated taste invite—
Her short-lived blossoms, ere they lead to fruit,
Demand a genial clime, and suns that shoot
Their rays direct, with undiminished light.
Thus HOPE, the passion-flower of human life,
Whose wild luxuriance mocks the pruner's knife,

Profuse in promise, makes a like display
Of evanescent blooms—that last a day!
To cheer the mental eye no more is given—
The fruit is only to be found in heaven!



LETTER XIII.



NOT many posts ago I sent you, my dear Lord, a Magician. I now send one of the same family, an Alchemist. An Alchemist is one who fancies that he is possessed of, or at least can discover, the art of converting the baser metals into gold or silver. The professors of this boastful art were formerly very numerous; but the total failure of their projects has for more than a century past brought the study of it into disrepute. Now and then, however, a solitary instance

occurs in which the successful practice of the chemical art has tempted an enthusiastic votary to wander into the fairy regions of Alchemy. There is a celebrated chemist now living who, it is said, was for many years of his life in pursuit of the philosopher's stone. He was, however, at length obliged to relinquish the chace of imaginary wealth, for the certain and immediate gains of his original profession, and in which he has eminently distinguished himself. The theory, which the alchemists were in hopes to realize, is briefly this: gold, according to their doctrine, being a constituent part in the composition of all other metals, and being, as they supposed, the heaviest of all metals, they flattered themselves that if they could once discover what they called the Philosopher's Stone, that is to say, a

certain matter or substance which would cause a separation of the parts of the baser metals, the lighter parts might be made to evaporate, leaving the heavier, or pure gold, behind. Their principal agent in all their operations was mercury, which they considered as the seed of all other metals, and by means of which, *secundum artem*, metals of what kind they pleased were to be propagated, &c.—

Materiemque manu certâ duplicarier arte.

MANILIUS, *Astronomicon*, l. 4, v. 248.

But though the alchemists failed in their grand project, their labours were not useless ; for they were rewarded by discoveries which are, perhaps, of more real importance to the happiness of mankind, than those they were in search of. For it is to their expe-

riments that we are indebted for the different preparations of mercury, antimony, &c. &c. of such extensive use in medicine and in many other arts:

The study of alchemy may be adduced as one amongst many other instances, to shew that to whatever the human mind may be applied, provided it be nothing vicious or immoral, the results of its application are, in some way or other, generally beneficial. For, though it may fail in the ultimate objects of its pursuit, it is almost always sure to collect something more or less valuable in its progress.

In regard to the study of that particular species of alchemy which I would recommend, and in which, as I flatter myself I

have made some proficiency, I may be permitted to speak of it from experience, your Lordship will never have occasion to fear being disappointed. Neither are the objects of it remote or collateral, but immediate and direct, and at all times within the reach of those who steadily pursue them.

SONNET XIV.

THE ALCHEMIST.

YE sage expounders of Hermetic lore,
 Who into Nature's dark recesses pry,
 Who trace the seeds of metals where they lie,
 And on their fancied propagation pore!
 The vain, tho' deep research, pursue no more!
 To find the fabled stone no longer try—
 And yet an Alchemist there is, whose eye
 Converts the veriest dross to purest ore!
 Her name CONTENT, whose mint of wealth out-
 shines
 The splendid produce of Peruvian mines.

By her instructed, soon shall you obtain
What Pride, nor Glory, nor Ambition gain.
What they with supercilious scorn behold,
Her moral Alchemy transmutes to gold!



LETTER XIV.

THOUGH I wrote to your Lordship a very long letter only two nights ago, I cannot resist the temptation of writing again almost immediately, were it only to express my thanks for the very welcome letter which I received this morning.

I am glad to find that at my recommendation your Lordship has read Mr. SHEE'S Poem. Your admiration of it shews the goodness of your taste, as do your remarks upon it the accuracy of your judgment.

And here permit me to observe, that on whatever you read, or have the opportunity of observing, you are perfectly in the right in making it a rule always to exercise your own judgment as well as to appeal to the judgment of others of more mature experience than yourself. For though your own judgment may and must be at present frequently erroneous, yet when assisted and regulated by the judgment of others, it will seldom fail to enable you to form correct opinions on most things which offer themselves to your understanding.

Mr. SHEE, I understand, ranks high in his profession as a painter. In an art which, from motives of ambition, interest, or inclination, he has made the business of his life, it is reasonable to suppose that he must ex-

cel, rather than in that to which he has probably applied only occasionally and for amusement. Yet, under these unequal circumstances, let him but once produce a painting that shall rival his poem, or deserve to stand in competition with it, we may then, and not till then, admit the triumph of the pencil over the pen. I, however, agree with your Lordship, that the objectionable circumstance which you have pointed out in Mr. SHEE's poem, does not in the slightest degree detract from its excellence as a composition. It is, indeed, an exquisite performance. The favourable reception which it has deservedly met with, it is natural to imagine, would before this time have encouraged the author to have published his poem complete, of which what is now before the public is, it seems, only a part.

The other publication, after which your Lordship enquires, you will find, I am persuaded, not uninteresting. The tales are well told, and the versification is by no means inelegant.

In rummaging over some old books lately, I stumbled upon one with the following title: “ *Human Prudence, or the Art by which a Man may raise himself and his fortune to Grandeur.*” The book was printed about a hundred years ago, and had then gone through ten editions ; and no wonder, if its contents would in any degree justify the splendid promise of its title-page. I seized upon it with avidity ; though not without severe self-reproach for having so long overlooked a treasure which, probably, has been in my possession for half a century, and which

might by this time have raised me, had I properly availed myself of it, to the head of my profession, or to some other dignified situation.

After very carefully reading over 202 pages of this invaluable treatise, though I must confess without meeting with any thing likely to advance either myself or my fortune a single step in the road to grandeur, I was repaid for the fatigue of travelling so far by the following quotation.

Vitam si liceat mihi
Formare arbitriis meis,
Non fasces, aut opes,
Non clarus niveis equis
Captiva agmina traxerim :
In solis habitem locis,
Hortos possideam, atque agros;

Illic, ad strepitus aquæ,
Musarum studiis fruar.
Sic cum fata mihi ultima
Pernerit Lachesis mea,
Non ulli gravis, aut malus,
Tranquillus moriar senex.

I do not recollect having met with these lines before, and have in vain looked for them in every writer where I thought they were likely to be found. Will you have the goodness to shew them to Mr. Smith. He, probably, may be able to direct me to their author. It is possible that they may have been written by some one of the very elegant Latin poets, who flourished about the time of Leo X. Though it must be confessed, that the imagery of the fourth and fifth lines does not favour the supposition.

And yet in attempting to imitate the simple unadorned style of antiquity, may it not be admissible to introduce such ideas as will best contribute to keep up the verisimilitude of the imitation? The lines pleased me so much that I could not resist the temptation of trying the following imitation of them in English.

O might I model to my mind
My span of life that's yet behind,
I would not ask superfluous wealth,
The sordid price of ease and health;
Nor would I struggle to obtain
The vain distinctions of the vain!
Be mine, in some sequestered nook,
A field, a garden, and a brook!
(How pure the pleasures that they yield!
The brook, the garden, and the field!)

To these would I devote my time,
Or meditate some idle rhyme.
And when at length my course was run,
And all my thread of life was spun,
Here from the world I'd steal away,
And close my inoffensive day !

Your Lordship will perceive that I have slightly deviated from the sense of the original in the 8th and 9th lines. It seemed to me that *fishing* (an amusement which you and I are partial to) would combine better with gardening and agriculture in this climate, than studying by the side of a rippling stream or a water-fall; which no doubt may afford a very delicious gratification under an Italian sky, but would by no means harmonize with our English feelings, during even the few hot days of an English summer.

Mrs. C. is much gratified by your Lordship's very kind enquiries. Though considerably better than when you were last at Woburn, she has not yet shaken off her complaint, which often returns with greater or less violence.

The *cacoæthes scribendi vel sonnetizandi* is an infectious disorder, which I have communicated, as your Lordship will perceive by the following sonnet, to my dear invalid. It is a first attempt in this, or, indeed, in almost every other species of poetical composition. I do not, however, mention the circumstance as an apology; for, unless I am egregiously blinded by partiality, it does not stand much in need of any.

SONNET XV.

ADDRESS TO THE NIGHTINGALE.

WELCOME, sweet bird of eve! whose warbling
notes,

That echoing back from yonder distant grove,
With sounds mellifluous invite to love

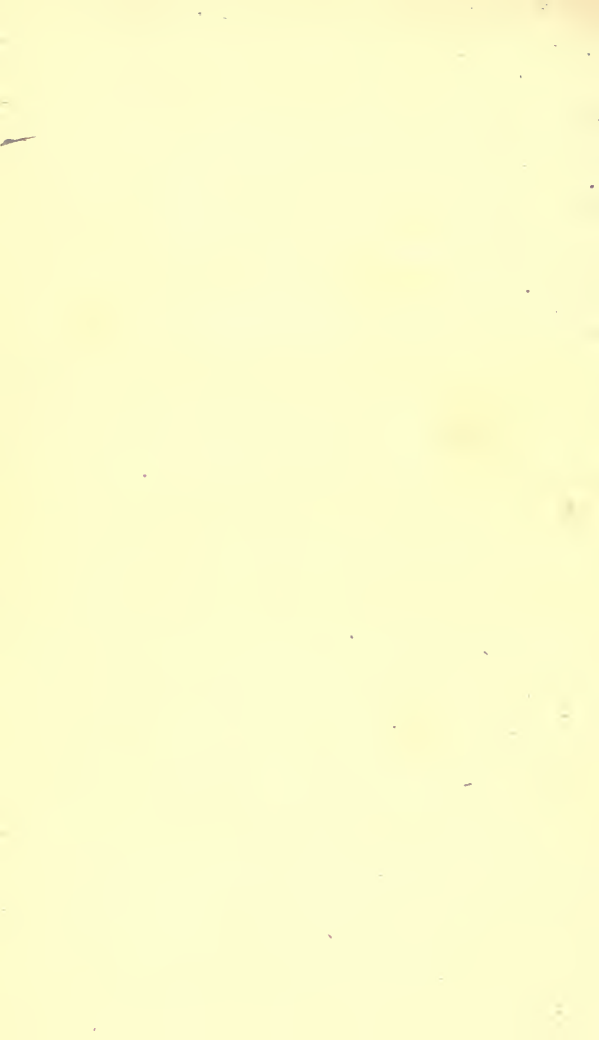
Thy fluttering mate, as in the air she floats!
Do anxious cares obtrude upon thy rest?

Or jealous fears of fancied wrongs complain?
These lend no cadence to thy pensive strain;
'Tis love, not fear, that wakes thy tuneful breast.

Thy visit calls to mind life's early spring,
When infant mirth lead on to harmless play;

When, like a bird, I fluttered on the wing,
In airy pleasures, innocent and gay!

O now, like thee, may peace consoling sing,
Thro' the calm evening of life's later day!



LETTER XV.

EVER since I received your Lordship's last letter, announcing that the 31st of last month was fixed for yours and your brother's departure from Dublin, I have been occupied in watching the weather. For though the day fixed upon was at this place one of the pleasantest which we have had this season, and the wind due west, yet I have not been without my fears, lest something might have happened to make you postpone your voyage a day or two longer.

than was originally intended. In that case you must have had to encounter with adverse and stormy winds, and a tempestuous sea. If you set sail on Saturday last, according to your first intention, you will be at the Abbey this evening, where I send this letter to give your Lordship the meeting, and where I shall hope to find all my three friends in the morning.

On the day you were to set sail my prayers and best wishes were with you all the time, and which I now convey to you in the following sonnet.

If the morning is not unfavourable, I shall be with you at an early hour.

I am, my dear Lord, &c.

SONNET XVI.

*On hearing that the Marquiss of Tavistock and his
brothers, Lords William and John Russel, were
on this day to set sail from Dublin.*

THE freighted vessel spreads her canvass wide;
Yet, ere she sails, the wary sons of gain
(In spite of chance their profits to retain)

Insure her value, whatsoe'er betide.

But uninsured must BEDFORD now confide

His richest treasures to the treacherous main !

Sense, virtue, truth, of vice the proud disdain,
Of filial piety th' affections tried,

Are wealth, if lost, which nothing can restore!

O smoothly sail the vessel that shall bring
These looked-for treasures from IERNE's shore!

And thou, Favonius, with thy gentlest wing,
To BRITAIN's Isle, O waft them safely o'er!

Thou doubly welcome Harbinger of Spring!

Jan. 31, 1807.

LETTER XVI.

HAVING an hour or two this morning to spare, I had determined to devote them to your Lordship, and was sitting down with the design of giving you my sentiments on a subject very different from that which I am now writing upon. But my thoughts were soon diverted from their intended channel by the riot of a drunken madman in the street. His riot, however, was of short duration. After staggering about for a few

minutes, he fell down in a state of insensibility and was carried home.

Without taking the immorality of his conduct into question, there is scarcely any sight more shocking than that of a drunken man, nor any more truly humiliating. Ebriety, besides being ruinous frequently to the fortunes, and always to the health of her votaries, and imbittering and shortening their lives, reduces them to a condition the most deplorable which humanity, in its lowest state of degradation, can be subject to; afflicting them at one and the same time with two of the severest calamities incident to mortality, palsy and mental derangement; for during the paroxysm of intoxication the mind is insane and the body paralytic!

It is a fortunate circumstance for the present generation, that drinking to excess is now much less prevalent than it was formerly; not only amongst the higher ranks of life, but through all the classes of polished society. Still, however, the use of fermented liquors prevails in a degree very unfavourable to health, laying the foundation of a variety of disorders, which, if they do not materially shorten the duration of our existence, have a great tendency to imbitter its enjoyments. The custom, which indeed is universal even in the soberest families, of sitting an hour or two over the bottle every day after dinner, is highly pernicious; as even the most abstemious are thus tempted to drink more than they otherwise would have wished for, or prudence would justify.

Add to this consideration, that a too familiar use of wine renders it unavailing, or at least weakens its efficacy, when any particular indisposition makes it necessary to resort to it as a medicine.

Notwithstanding all that is here said against intoxication, your Lordship is, I dare say, at this moment as intoxicated as I am with joy at the abolition of the slave-trade. It is the triumph of reason, humanity, and religion, over sophistry, avarice, and *practical atheism*. The news of this important event reached me this morning. I most religiously believe, if that diabolical traffic had been persisted in, that the time would not have been far distant when God, in punishment of our wickedness, would

have delivered us up to all the horrors of slavery, under that instrument of his vengeance, the Corsican Tyrant.

I am, my dear Lord, &c.

P. S. Consider what solitary beings Mrs. C. and I are. If your Lordship is half so compassionate a young man as I take you to be, you will more frequently indulge me with your Letters. Should you plead want of leisure, Mr. SMITH will, I have no doubt, so far relax in his demands upon your time, as to permit you to perform an act of charity, which, I need not point out to your Lordship, is the noblest way in which time can be employed.

SONNET XVII.

EBRIETY.

FROM Nature's simple path perversely straying,
 Man for each error seeks some vain excuse ;
 Some specious plea has always to produce
 That justifies to vice his homage paying.
 His thoughts in sophistry's loose garb arraying,
 Of Nature's blessings he perverts the use.
 Thus with the wholesome grape's fermented
 juice
 His reason drowning, not his thirst allaying,
 He boasts of joys to vulgar souls unknown ;
 That wit and mirth and spirit are his own ;

His too the boast that pain, nor grief, nor care,
Nor melancholy gloom his moments share!
Now mark the boaster, wallowing as he lies—
Paralysis and Phrensy seize their prize!

LETTER XVII.

My dear Friend,

SYMPATHY, though in itself an involuntary sensation, is, like every other moral feeling, not incapable of being restrained and regulated. It is necessary, however, to observe, that restriction and regulation, unless judiciously directed, will be too apt to deaden and destroy that which it is their intention to strengthen or improve.

Without sympathy man would be a solitary savage. Taking no interest in the enjoyments or sufferings of others, he would be attentive only to his own gratifications. It is sympathy which is the great bond and cement of society, not only in the most tender and endearing connexions of domestic life, but in all the different relations which we stand in with regard to mankind in general. Sympathy is in the moral world what gravitation and attraction are in the natural: It is that which unites and binds us to each other, acting most powerfully on those who are most nearly and intimately connected, whether as relations or friends, and gradually extending its influence to the remotest of our species. Were the operation of sympathy to cease, society would fall to pieces; as matter, if its cohesive attraction

were destroyed or suspended, would resolve itself into its elementary atoms, and be dispersed.

There is one restriction in the indulgence of sympathy which is indispensable: and that is, not to suffer ourselves to be so far seduced or misled by it as to be drawn in to participate in the vices of even our nearest and dearest friends ; nor yet to countenance and encourage them in their immoral or unamiable propensities.

In those particular sympathies which call upon us for our friendly interference and exertions, our conduct is to be regulated by what we owe to ourselves, to our families, our friends, and our connexions. Though we may be under the painful necessity of doing

violence to the generous impulse of our nature, yet we are to consider that by indiscriminately giving way to this impulse, we may be injuring those who have the first claims upon our attention; and we are to consider also, that their happiness is not to be sacrificed to what, in such a case, would be the morbid sensibility of our own feelings.

In short, though the heart (according to the metaphor made use of in the sonnet) were capable of the most perfect sympathetic harmony, it is not an instrument which every one should be permitted *to play upon*. There are cases, however, in which we may be permitted freely to indulge its most exquisite vibrations, according to that amiable

precept of St. Paul, " Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep."

As your Lordship has at present no acquaintance with music, either practically or in theory, it may be necessary to explain a curious musical phenomenon, which is introduced into the following sonnet, as an instance of one of the sympathies of matter. It is this: when two strings are in unison, that is to say, are of such length and tension as to emit the same sound, if, when they are brought sufficiently near to each other, so as to be within the sphere of their respective activities, you strike the one forcibly, the other will sound though it is not touched.

Chords in music are those notes which, when sounded together, harmonize with each other.

Diapason, in its primary sense, and in which I use it, means the whole extent of the musical scale ; a sense which, your Lordship will perceive, its etymology implies.

I am, my dear Lord, &c.

SONNET XVIII.

SYMPATHY.

THAT law of nature well may we admire,
 Which gives to matter sympathies profound :
 Touch but the simple string, when duly wound,
 An echo answers from its kindred wire.
 But greater reverence must that law inspire
 Which Mind obeys. When rightly tuned and
 sound,
 Each selfish tone in SYMPATHY is drowned,
 That makes the heart her animated lyre.
 If sympathy her kindred touch impart,
 What chords of passion vibrate through the heart !

What notes within her diapason lie !

No strain of woe too deep, of joy too high !

She tunes in unison each mental strife,

And hence the moral harmony of life.

LETTER XVIII.

I AM much pleased, my dear Friend, to find that the practical alchemist, Content, is such a favourite. Unless I am much deceived, you and the alchemist will be very constant companions. I now send a sonnet addressed to a near relation of her's, Patience, who is ready to be of your party, whenever she may be invited to form a trio.

“ But why send me,” you exclaim, “ a Sonnet on the subject of Patience? Did you ever perceive that it was a virtue in which I was particularly deficient?” No, my dear Lord, I certainly never did; and for very obvious reasons. With a young man, like your Lordship, one half of whose wishes are anticipated before they are even formed, and the other half are gratified as soon as they are known, there is little opportunity for Patience to exert herself. I will here, however, do your Lordship no more than justice in saying, that it can rarely happen when the propriety of your wishes does not intitle you to their gratification. But still, the amiable impetuosity of a young and ardent mind will naturally be aiming at objects not immediately within its reach. In such cases there is no other alternative than either to

relinquish the pursuit, or patiently to await for time and opportunity, when the pursuit can be prosecuted with a prospect of success. This conflict, no doubt, you have before this time often experienced; and will then judge how necessary patience is to preserve the tranquillity of the mind. But the trials of patience, which you at present may be called upon to endure, are trifling in comparison with those which you must expect to experience in the future progress of your life.

In our progress through life we have to contend not only with the natural evils incident to our nature, but with the moral evils originating in our own bad passions, or the bad passions of others. There is no one, however exalted may be his station, or however excluded he may be from the com-

mon intercourse with the world, who is out of the reach of envy, malignity, detraction, rivalry, or malice; any of which may have the power, at one time or other, to inflict the most deadly wounds, or to implant in our bosoms their envenomed shafts, which it may require years to remove: not only our bad, but our thoughtless and imprudent passions may involve us in difficulties and distress of very long duration: the natural evils of life, such as pain, sickness, the loss or unhappiness of those we are connected with, or who are dear to us, with many other nameless and unavoidable calamities, we must expect will from day to day assail us in almost every direction: against such a formidable host of enemies to our peace and happiness, Patience only can enable us to make a successful stand.

It is very singular that there are few virtues, whose dictates we are in general more unwilling to listen to, than those of Patience; and yet what gratification can there be, either real or imaginary, in disobeying them? So far from this being the case, Impatience under calamity, serves only to aggravate its violence; and the effects of this aggravation are not confined to ourselves, but extend to others whose sympathetic sensibility leads them to participate not only in our real distresses, but in those which our unruly tempers and imaginations torment us with.

It has been observed by FIELDING, if I mistake not, that Patience is a virtue which is soon fatigued with exercise. This observation is more humorous than strictly true.

It is by exercise only that Patience, like every other virtuous disposition, becomes habitual; becoming habitual, she of course ceases to be fatigued. That she may be neither fatigued nor even exercised in her intercourse with your Lordship, is the fervent prayer of, &c.

SONNET XIX.

PATIENCE.

ON life's tempestuous Ocean as we sail,
How oft are we compell'd to change our tack !
Now driven far distant from our destined track,
We strive in vain against the adverse gale !
Now " bound in shallows," spiritless and pale,
What fears alarm us, when with sails aback,
The breakers to escape, our course we slack,
And hope and skill and resolution fail !
As oil expands upon the troubled deep,
And lays the agitated waves asleep,

Do thou, O PATIENCE, a like task perform,
Smooth down our passions and allay the storm !
Let the mind's tempest be no longer heard,
Nor the heart sicken at the hope deferr'd !

LETTER XIX.



THE sonnet which I now send is on a subject of which your Lordship can, as yet, have had little experience. But even little as that experience must necessarily have been, your Lordship cannot but be sensible of the folly of expecting to pass through life without your share of its unavoidable evils, and of the grief which those evils must as unavoidably occasion. There is reason, however, to believe, that the load of grief which the necessary condition of humanity im-

poses upon us, would be much more tolerable than it is, if we did not perpetually add to it by our own misconduct. I have that confidence in your Lordship, as to persuade myself that your own conduct will rarely administer occasion of serious grief, either to your friends or your own heart, which, I trust, will always continue as pure and innocent as it is at present.

To be unmoved at the calamities of life argues a brutish insensibility, repugnant to the amiable feelings and sympathies of our nature. To sink under affliction and to give way to immoderate grief proceeds sometimes from effeminate imbecillity of mind, but more frequently from selfishness and pride, passions which revolt at mortification and disappointment, as injurious to their

imaginary pretensions, or degrading to their dignity.

I know a lady, a woman in some respects of a superior understanding, who, in consequence of the death of a favourite infant daughter, which happened several years ago, has been ever since in such affliction as not to have recovered the tranquillity of her mind to this hour! You will hear with increased astonishment that she is blest with six most promising and affectionate children, now grown up, and a husband who doats upon her!

I congratulate your Lordship on the happy arrival of your Hibernian brother: but perhaps you are afflicting yourself that it was not a sister. If your affliction is not very

immoderate, I possibly may sympathize with you. I will not, however, promise that my sympathy shall be attended with any very serious grief, as I have no fear of your new brother's degenerating from those who have preceded him.

I am, my dear Lord, your faithful
and affectionate friend, &c.

SONNET XX.

GRIEF.

WHEN GRIEF within the wounded heart is pent,
 The struggling sorrow why should we restrain?
 Why from the luxury of tears refrain,
 Nor give the torrent of affliction vent?
 Fair flow the torrent to its full extent!
 So Nature pleads, nor must she plead in vain—
 But why should Grief life's current always stain,
 Pollute its pleasures, and its ills augment?
 O'er blooms of every hue her stole is thrown,
 That gives to all a colour of its own.

Minutest evils, which the searching eye
Of Reason but in embryo can descry,
As Giant forms of Terror shall appear,
Viewed thro' Affliction's microscopic tear!

LETTER XX.

My dear Lord,

It would be no difficult undertaking to prove that there is scarcely any passion which, when suffered to operate within certain limits, is not justifiable, and even necessary; and which might not be virtuously gratified, or usefully indulged in. This observation will apply to none with stricter propriety than to that which I have chosen for the subject of the following sonnet.

Pride, when carried to excess, is univer-

sally admitted to be one of the most odious and despicable passions by which the human mind can be actuated and degraded. And yet, without some portion of this stimulating ingredient in his composition, man would be but an insipid character. For without this powerful motive to virtue and virtuous ambition, he would be too often inattentive to the claims which he had upon society, or to those which society had upon him. Having few other guides of his conduct than abstract principles of right and wrong, the energies of his mind would be but imperfectly awakened ; or if by any unusual exertion or excitement they were momentarily called into action, they would soon subside and relapse into torpid inactivity, or, at the best, fall short of the objects which they were directed to.

By duly appreciating his situation and connexions in society, and by properly estimating their value, he learns to set a proper value upon himself; and this self-estimation, which is but another word for pride, tells him, in language which could not, it might be supposed, be easily misunderstood, that its gratification is legitimately to be obtained in no other way than by first obtaining the esteem of others.

So far, then, pride is an useful, not to say virtuous passion. But it unfortunately happens, that we seldom wait till our characters have acquired their due value from the sterling approbation of the world. Estimating our title to the respect and homage of mankind by the imaginary standard of our own importance, we are perpetually

endeavouring to enforce our claims, sometimes by artifice, and at others by insolence ; by insolence, which makes us shunned and detested, or by artifice, which makes us laughed at and despised. And hence, in support of our fanciful pretensions, we have recourse to every expedient which our inflated imaginations can suggest. Forming the most chimerical calculations on the distinctions of birth, fortune, rank, station, or personal accomplishments, we draw upon one or other of these alternately or collectively, as may best answer our purpose, for the tax which we have the impertinent presumption to fancy that we are entitled to exact. And yet, as it is not altogether unreasonable to value ourselves, to a certain extent, on these distinctions, pride, on any of these grounds, may be forgiven, pro-

vided it shews itself in such a way as to prove that we are not unworthy of them. “The fame of an applauded ancestor,” as an ingenious historian very justly observes,* “has stimulated many to perform noble actions, or to preserve an honourable character, and will continue so to operate while human nature exists. It creates a sentiment of honour, a dread of disgrace, an useful pride of name, which, though not universally efficient, will frequently check the vicious propensities of passion or selfishness, when reason or religion has exhorted in vain.” The same observation will hold good with respect to those other grounds of distinction on which may be founded admissible claims.

* Turner’s History of the Manners, &c. of the Anglo-Saxons.

But the most striking singularity in the history of this universal passion is, that it generally prevails most where there is the least foundation for it to build upon. There is no man so obscure and insignificant as not to be proud, if he be so disposed. Such is the insatiable appetite of some men for distinction, that no means are thought too improbable or absurd to obtain it. Hence a man who has neither family, fortune, rank, station, nor personal endowments on which to value himself, will frequently exhibit as much pride in his conversation and deportment as a German prince, or a grandee of Spain. Scarcely any man, however, is so circumstanced as not to have the means of gratifying a laudable pride, if with such limited gratification he will be modestly contented. Every one, how humble soever

may be his station, has some pursuit, profession, or occupation, in which it ought to be his pride and his ambition to endeavour at least to excel. Besides these, there is another field of exertion which is open to every one; in which, indeed, the palm of glory may be contested for even by the lowest with the highest; by the peasant with the prince. The contest which I allude to is in the race of virtue, in which it should be our highest ambition, as our greatest pride, to be crowned with victory.

SONNET XXI.

PRIDE.

YE sons of PRIDE, with supercilious glance
 Why turn from modest diffidence away?
 On Nature's equal children look askance,
 And eye with cold regard your kindred clay?
 If thus your fancied claims ye would advance,
 How widely distant from your aim you stray!
 Would you your real consequence inhance,
 Let Pride a different character display.
 Do virtuous ancestors of noble birth
 Your Pride inflame? Go, emulate their worth.

Is wealth your boast? Then yours the power to
bless!

How proud the feeling to relieve distress!

Are yours the untold treasures of the mind?

What pride with these to benefit mankind!

LETTER XXI.



To you, my dear Lord, who have given so many convincing proofs of mental intrepidity in aiming, and with success, at attainments which few at your age would have aspired to, or even thought of, it may seem singular that I now send a sonnet which has for its subject the reverse of that spirit which I have so much admired, and from which I augur, at some future period, very great achievements. What I would wish to counteract is that irresolute timidity of

mind which so powerfully operates in repressing the exertions of intellect, when directed to pursuits either scientific or literary.

The timidity which I speak of, when we give way to it, is a greater impediment to our progress than indolence, or even aversion. Aversion in time may be overcome, or even converted into desire; indolence may be shaken off, and by a favourable concurrence of circumstances, roused into action. But timidity, if once suffered to prevail, is seldom to be conquered, gaining strength the more she is given way to. This timidity arises, in general, from a misconception of our own powers, and of the powers of those whom we look up to, or with whom we are likely to be competitors in the race of

literary or scientific excellence, and between whom and ourselves we are too apt to suppose there is an immeasurable distance. In fact, there is no greater disparity between the natural unimproved intellect of one man and another, than may be observed between the bodily powers of one man and another; some particular men, it is true, possessing uncommon strength and agility, while others are as remarkably feeble and inactive. But the general mass of mankind have bodily powers completely adequate to the general purposes for which those powers are required. The same analogy holds good in intellectual endowments. Shakespeares and Newtons, it must be acknowledged, are beings of a superior order, who have hitherto left all their competitors behind. It does not however follow, that they are

never to be equalled nor surpassed, much less, that it requires a greater strength of intellect than falls to the share of the generality of mankind, to attain to a respectable station in the ranks of science or literature. No one knows his own powers till he has fairly put them to the trial.

In one respect the powers of the mind, in the progress of their improvement, have a decided pre-eminence over those of the body. The strongest man can only lift a given weight. The most active can only spring a certain height. There is a certain point, and which they very soon arrive at, beyond which no training or exertion will enable them to pass. And even at this point they can remain only during the full vigour and prime of life, and from which, after a

certain period, they must submit daily to recede. But no man scarcely ever pushed the powers of his mind to such an extent as to feel himself unable to proceed still further. So far from this being the case, the mind, in general, feels her powers of progression regularly increase the farther she extends her progress.

A timid mind is always foreseeing difficulties. Nothing that is worth the attaining ought to be thought too difficult to attain; unless, indeed, it be morally or physically impossible. In fact, on a truly vigorous and energetic mind, that which the ignorant and timid consider as a difficulty, acts only as an incentive to exertion.

I need say nothing to your Lordship on

the obligation of those, on whom nature has bestowed superior powers, to cultivate them to the best advantage. If the timid suffer by excess of diffidence, persons of this description as frequently suffer by too great a confidence. I do not mean a confidence which prompts them to undertake too much, but a too great confidence in themselves, which tempts them to be idle and undertake nothing. Finding that they are able to outstrip their rivals and competitors whenever they please, they think it equally easy to overtake them, when from indolent or dissipated habits they have at any time suffered them to take the lead; too frequently verifying the well-known fable of the hare and the tortoise. There is no habit more fatal to literary or scientific excellence, or indeed, to any kind of excellence which depends

upon exertion, than this. The best that can be expected from those who give way to it, is the paltry satisfaction to escape disgrace.

Virtue and talents are the only rational grounds of distinction amongst intelligent creatures, accountable for their actions to a superior being. They mutually aid and assist each other in carrying on the great purposes which they were designed for—the promoting the happiness of those on whom they are conferred, and of mankind in general. Without virtue, talents would too frequently be useless or destructive: and without talents, virtue, though in every condition amiable, would as frequently be at a loss how to exert herself in the way most beneficial to society. In proportion as our talents are improved, the sphere of our vir-

tues is enlarged. It is incumbent upon us, therefore, to improve to the utmost whatever talents we may be endowed with. The more elevated and conspicuous our situation may be in society, the more is this obligation imposed upon us.

SONNET XXII.

FEAR.

WELL may the trembling wretch our pity share,
 At FEAR's torpedo touch who shrink aghast!
 His keen ideal sufferings, while they last,
 Than real pain a sterner aspect wear.
 With him the timid slave may I compare,
 Whose mind, by childish diffidence o'ercast,
 From science turns, and deems a load so vast
 Gigantic intellect alone can bear?
 Whose is this intellect of giant mould?
 'Tis yours, 'tis mine, if not to sloth resigned;

If pressing onwards, confident and bold,
We resolutely strive to leave behind
The dastard race, who dare not to unfold
Their latent powers and energies of mind.

LETTER XXII.



My dear young Friend,

I HAVE just been reading the account of a recent event, as it is related in two different newspapers, the one devoted to the interests of the ministry, the other an advocate for their opponents. In one of these authentic histories of the day the circumstance which it records is affirmed to be the result of superior wisdom, to discover a

most profound knowledge of the political interests of the country, and that in its consequences it will secure to us, for a long series of ages, the blessings of our unrivalled constitution in church and state! Of this gratifying picture the other historian, whose authentic narrative is equally to be depended upon, gives a most melancholy reverse. He deprecates the event, which the former dwells upon with so much complacency and triumph, as a circumstance the most alarming; as originating in folly and rashness, and which will entail upon poor old England, disgrace and ruin to remotest posterity! To which of these contemporary historians are we to give credit? Certainly to neither of them.

It may be said that these journalists are

hired partisans, inlisted under the banner of contending factions; who reconcile and give that colour to events which may best serve the purposes of those whose battles they are engaged to fight, by considering such conduct as a mere *Ruse de guerre*, allowable in the heat of an engagement. There is, however, no necessity to suppose that even these men are so unprincipled as to be governed solely by sordid or self-interested motives. The very best and wisest of mankind have great difficulty in forming opinions which shall not be influenced, in a greater or less degree, by their prejudices, partialities, or passions.

Perhaps the historians most entitled to credit are not those who flourished in the very times of which they write; nor

those who were actually engaged in the scenes which they describe. For though they certainly have the best means of furnishing information, their information, for reasons already suggested, is not always the most to be depended upon.

It is the historian, who lives so near the times of which he writes as that the facts which he records shall be yet fresh in the memory, while the party violence and animosity with which those facts had been misrepresented and disguised, have subsided, from whom there is the best chance of truth. And here it may be observed, that historical truth does not consist in the mere relation of facts (for as to mere facts the most opposite historians may be agreed) but in the faithful developement of the real causes or

pretended motives which produced them. As in a criminal indictment or prosecution, the truth of the charge is not proved by substantiating the evidence of the simple fact, but by combining with it the evil intention and the law.

History is said to be, and not unhappily, Philosophy teaching by example; and that Chronology and Geography are her two eyes.

A knowledge of geography discovers to us the relative situation of the different countries whose history we are reading: by shewing the boundaries of their respective empires, it suggests to us, in many cases, the probable grounds of the connexion or disagreement between neighbouring states:

it enables us, in pursuing the narrative of their campaigns, to trace out the line of march ; to see, as it were, the encounter between contending armies, and in some degree to comprehend the policy or impolicy of their different military operations. By being made acquainted with the geographical history and scite of each particular country, many of those customs and peculiarities are explained which result from the soil or climate, and which seldom fail, in conjunction with the government, to influence the national manners and character.

Chronology is to history what perspective is to painting: it gives to each event its proper distance and bearing: it is therefore necessary that in studying history a strict attention should be paid to the chronolo-

gical series of occurrences, otherwise we shall be apt to invert their order, to mistake cause for effect, or to attribute effects to wrong causes. The impressions which would be thus left upon the mind would be as incongruous and confused, as would be the impression made upon the eye by a painting, put together in violation of the rules of perspective ; in which a house might be made to appear as if standing on the arm of a tree, or a river flowing up the side of a mountain.

It is the business of philosophy (of that, I mean, which relates to the regulation of our lives, as we are moral agents, and which is therefore called moral philosophy,) to direct us, in our search after happiness, to the objects which we are to pursue ; to point

out those which we are to avoid, and to demonstrate the necessity of keeping the passions, the appetites, and affections, under the controul of reason. To this end it is necessary that she should explain their nature and their office, and in what manner they co-operate with, or have a tendency to counteract each other; that she should develop and exhibit them under all their disguises and modifications, and should distinctly mark out the errors which mankind may be drawn into by their excess or their defect. Though all this may be made, and usually is made, intelligible to the understanding, and impressed upon our feelings, by the mere application of abstract reasoning and argument, yet the conviction of the truths of philosophy strikes with redoubled force, and communicates an in-

creased gratification, when accompanied by the additional argument of example. As of a geometrical proposition, there is a more lively pleasure in seeing the exemplification which is afforded by some ingenious piece of mechanism, than in contemplating the diagram by which it is demonstrated.

The events which are produced by the mechanism of society furnish a practical illustration of the precepts and dogmas of philosophy. A very slight acquaintance with history will inform us, that every passion which can agitate the human heart, every sentiment that can emanate from the intellect of man will, in all countries, at one time or other, be brought into action in the discussion or arrangement of their external relations, or of their internal or domestic

policy. There is no passion so base, or so exalted; no sentiment so dignified, or so degrading, as not to be employed in carrying on, or in retarding the operations of government in the administration of public affairs; and consequently, controuling the course and direction of political events. And this observation holds true, whether the government be free or despotic: in the one case the passion and its object may be avowed; in the other they are necessarily concealed, and shew themselves only in their effects. It is the knowledge of these springs of action, and the reasonings which are employed in explaining the principles of their movement, which give to history its philosophical character.

Your Lordship will no doubt perceive,

from what has been observed, that in studying history, when properly written, you are not only storing your memory with important facts, ready to be referred to or called out into use when they may be wanted, but that you are improving your understanding by an insight into the structure and anatomy of the human mind; that while you are making yourself acquainted with man in his collective capacity, as formed into political combinations, and as he exists in society, you will imperceptibly be acquiring a knowledge of his moral and intellectual powers in the abstract.

Instead of closing my letter, as usual, with a poetical corollary, I shall refer your Lordship to Mr. Hayley's Essay on History, which, with the notes, will furnish every

elucidation of this interesting subject, that elegant poetry, correct taste, or liberal and most extensive erudition, can supply.

Your Lordship has already had my thanks for your very elegant version from Horace. With my thanks I sent also some strictures on those few passages which seemed to be objectionable. I now enter upon a more agreeable office.

I have carefully compared yours and FRANCIS's translation together. Your translation of the first two lines of the original, though diffuse, is strikingly easy and harmonious. FRANCIS, though he has, in this instance, the advantage of your Lordship in compression, has made an egregious blunder *in limine*.

“ Mæcenas, who from kings *descend*,

“ O thou my patron and my friend*.”

Grammar requiring *descendest*. The sentence might, indeed, be made grammatical, by substituting *you* for *thou*; but still it would be abominably harsh. The personal pronoun, “thou,” should, in this case, have preceded the relative and the verb, something in this way:

“ Mæcenas, thou who dost descend

“ From kings, my patron and my friend:” &c.

Your Lordship has certainly not given the

* This is as the passage stands in the first edition. I have since discovered, though not till after this Letter went to the press, that in the subsequent editions it is corrected.

sense of the original so close, in some places, as FRANCIS, (his profest purpose, indeed, was to *translate*,) but what your translation, or rather paraphrase, wants in closeness, is made up for in spirit. And if some few of his lines are rather more finished, many of yours are more animated. I am particularly pleased with your translations of these two passages:

Mercator metuens, &c.

and

Me doctarum ederæ, &c.

In the first passage you have been particularly happy in the amplification of “*otium et oppidi laudat*,” &c. and in the second you have united ease and elegance with closeness and fidelity.

Before I close this paper I will observe, that the two concluding lines of the original seem to me never to have been rightly understood by any of the commentators or translators whom I have yet met with :

Quod si me lyricis vatibus *inseres*

Sublimi feriam sidera vertice.

You all suppose the word *inseres* to belong to the verb *insero*, *inserui*. Under this supposition, the passage must be literally translated thus : “ But if you will insert, or enrol me amongst the lyric poets”—what?—“ I shall strike the stars with my lofty head!” How is the latter branch of this sentence, “ I shall strike the stars with my lofty head,” a consequence of the former branch, “ If you will insert me amongst the lyric

poets"? Is it possible to conceive any thing more illogical or more nonsensically bombast? Perhaps you will say,

Te doctarum ederae frontium

Diis miscent superis—

is an expression equally figurative, and that if this is admissible, the other is admissible also. But this expression admits of a rational explanation in the sense usually understood. You are to observe, that one mode of honouring their deities which the ancients resorted to, was by crowning the statues which represented them. When any one, therefore, was so distinguished by his talents, or other adventitious circumstances, as to be intitled to a crown, the crowning him was considered as conferring upon him a species of immortality,

something of the nature of divine honours ; and of consequence, by an allowable figure, associating him, in a certain degree, with their divinities. Under this view of the subject the expression, *Diis miscent superis*, is neither forced nor unnatural.

All the commentators and translators, whom I have yet consulted, endeavour to get over the difficulty here noticed, by some metaphorical circumlocution which has no reference to the metaphor which the poet himself employs. The word *inseres*, in the sense in which Horace uses it, belongs to the verb *insero*, *insevi*, not *insero*, *inserui*. And of course, the metaphor he employs is taken from engrafting, a process in gardening, which is the implanting the young shoot or branch of one species of tree into the

stem or stalk of another of the same genus, usually of a hardier kind, chiefly for the purpose of obtaining more prolific or vigorous shoots. If my conjecture be, as I am persuaded it is, right, the poet's meaning will be this: "But if you engraft me on the lyric poets, I shall shoot out so vigorously that my top will soon reach the stars." By this interpretation the metaphor is unbroken, and the hyperbole, extravagant as it is, has a meaning obvious and intelligible.

To this I will add, that if Mecænas were much attached, as many of the Romans were known to be, to the fascinating pursuits of Horticulture, perhaps engrafting might have been a favourite process with him, and which he was fond of practising; in that case the

allusion would carry with it an air of pleasantry.

Perhaps I cannot explain myself better, than by giving a poetical translation of the passage itself, beginning at *Te* (i. e. *Mecænatem*) *doctarum ederaæ frontium*. The edition which your Lordship has made use of reads, I perceive, *Me doctarum*, &c. but as your translation of that part is so particularly beautiful, I do not wish you to alter it.

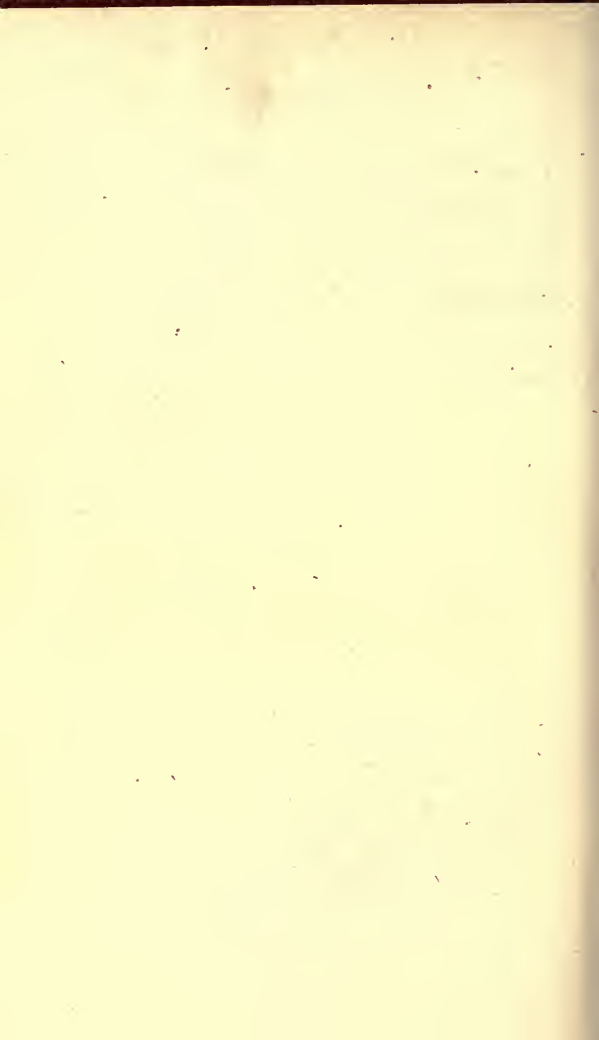
The ivy's learned wreath is thine,
That joins thee to the powers divine.
Be mine the cool sequester'd grove,
Where sport the nymphs, the satyrs rove;
Where dwell the muses, and the choir
That listen to the Lesbian lyre:
Grafted on this, thy poet's bay
Soon to the stars shall shoot away!

Macenas, notwithstanding the authority of the oldest of Horace's editors, down to your Lordship, the youngest of his translators, (I am here speaking *chronologically*, otherwise I should not have closed my anti-climax with your Lordship,) is not properly spelled. The diphthong should be in the second syllable, as thus, Mecænas. Its etymology is *Μη κοινος*, literally in English, Uncommon. We have an English name of great celebrity, which exactly answers to it—NEVILE, from the Latin *Ne vilis*.

I made application for your poem as your Lordship directed me. Unfortunately it is left in Ireland. I must request your Lordship will, therefore, have the goodness to favour me with a copy of it through some other channel. The severity of my criti-

cisms on your ode must not deter you from submitting it to my perusal. You will recollect that it has been the fate of the greatest poets to have the most malignant and unmerciful critics: Homer had his Zoïlus, Pope his John Dennis, and your Lordship has

Your &c.



LETTER XXIII.

My dear Lord,

It is said, I am told, by some of the mathematicians of Cambridge, that **** (certainly one of the first young noblemen of the age) would have been as able a man as **** had he been equally well skilled in mathematics. Nay, so far do these gentlemen carry their partiality for this their favourite study as to affirm, that the masterly know-

ledge which, it seems, * * * * acquired of this sublime science at college, laid the foundation of his subsequent greatness!! If this really were the case, it is, in the opinion of many, much to be lamented that, both for the happiness of his own country and of the world at large, he ever passed the *Pons asininus*.

Your Lordship must not, however, infer from the above anecdote, and the observation upon it, that I am disposed to think lightly of mathematical studies and pursuits. A certain degree of acquaintance with the science of mathematics is indispensably necessary to the acquisition of almost every other; most other sciences being built upon it. Every one, therefore, ought to know something, at least, of its elementary prin-

ciples. Your Lordship will perceive the justness of this observation, when you consider that the first step in this science is arithmetic, which, with geometry, is, indeed, the general foundation of all mathematics.

Geometry is supposed to have had its origin amongst the Egyptians, who, in consequence of the periodical inundations of the Nile, washing away or obliterating with mud the marks and boundaries of their respective lands, had recourse to the consideration of their figure and quantity, to distinguish them again when the waters had subsided. As this method or art, which annual necessity compelled them to repeat, required the ground to be actually measured and delineated by figures, it obtained the

name of Geometry, which implies the art of measuring land. A contemplation of the figures, which in this new art were necessarily made use of, and the calculations which would be required to ascertain their proportional relations, it is natural to suppose, might lead to a knowledge of all those wonderful properties which were afterwards discovered in the science of quantity and extension. Thus from a simple germ, produced, as it were, from the mud of the Nile, has arisen that stupendous branch of knowledge, by which we are enabled to ascend to the highest and most distant regions of the material heaven; to become acquainted with planets not visible to the naked eye; to measure their diameters and distances, and to calculate their velocities and revolutions!

From Egypt mathematics were carried into Greece by Thales, who instructed his countrymen in geometry. After him came Pythagoras, who was the first, as we are told, who abstracted geometry from matter. Pythagoras was succeeded by many other eminent mathematicians, particularly by Democritus. Democritus was followed by Plato, who improved the science and extended its application. The next whom I shall mention is Euclid, who collected together all those theorems, which had been invented by former mathematicians, and digested them into fifteen books, under the title of "Elements of Geometry;" a book in which, I presume, your Lordship is by this time, or will soon be, initiated.

The last whom I shall notice is that pro-

digy of mathematical science and mechanical resource, Archimedes; whose invention was as inexhaustible as his genius was profound. A bare recital of his discoveries would fill a volume. He seems to have possessed, beyond any other mathematician who had preceded, or has yet succeeded him, a facility of applying the principles of philosophical science to practical and stupendous purposes. By the powers of his own genius alone he was able to defend the city of Syracuse against the efforts of a besieging army, headed by a distinguished Roman general. That memorable saying of his, to his friend and patron, Hiero, *Δος μοι πρ ὧν, καὶ κενῶ την γην*, which in any other man had been considered but as the vain unmeaning assertion of arrogant presumption, may be admitted in Archimedes, as

an allowable hyperbole, expressive of his superior knowledge in mathematical science, and of the confidence he placed in the due application of the mechanical powers.

The study of mathematics, even when applied to no immediate purposes of utility, is highly gratifying to the mind, as every step in our progress is marked by some incontrovertible truth which we were unacquainted with before. Such is the beauty of truth, that the very abstract contemplation of it, independent on any other consideration, affords in its investigation a pleasure to the understanding peculiar to itself. But when this pleasure is accompanied by the consideration of the utility of this science, we have an additional motive for bestowing upon it our attention.

Amongst other objects which mathematics embrace, and which, indeed, are only branches of it, are mechanics; music; painting; (which, without the knowledge of perspective, would cease to be a science, a mere manual art;) navigation; geography; astronomy; chronology; architecture; that horrible, though, as the world is now constituted, that necessary science, the science of war, with its tactics, gunnery, fortification, &c. &c. There is scarcely any man whose situation in life does not require a knowledge in some of these sciences, which knowledge is fundamentally and effectually to be obtained in no other way than through the medium of the master-science, mathematics.

In those, who from their education and

connexions in society are expected to move in the higher spheres of life, an ignorance of the liberal sciences is as disgraceful as it will frequently be found inconvenient.

I shall finish this letter in the words of that very classical scholar, the late Gilbert Wakefield, whose pursuits and occupations, it might be supposed, would have given him a predilection in favour of the study of literature in preference to that of mathematics. “Happy,” says he, “is that man who lays the foundation of his future studies deep in the recesses of geometry! that purifier of the soul, as Plato calls it, and in the principles of mathematical philosophy: compared with whose noble theories* our

* *Quere, Theorems?*

classical lucubrations are as the glimmering of a taper to the meridian splendours of an æquatorial sun."

SONNET XXIII.

MATHESIS.

THE laws of motion, number, time, and space,
 Material nature, thro' her widest range
 Of abstract properties that never change,
 And those that practical pursuits embrace—
 All these, MATHESIS, it is thine to trace!

To thee what objects, high or low, are strange,
 From Heaven's expanse down to the humble
 grange?

Thy geometric skill her starting place
 Here first assumed, and *there* she wings her flight!

To thy inquiring mind what views are given !
The comet's devious track, the speed of light,
The earth's nutation, all the scope of heaven !
Say what beyond thy grasp of thought sublime,
Save that DREAD POWER alone, who fills all
space, all time !

P. S. I forgot to notice an important circumstance attending the study of mathematics, which is totally distinct from the objects of its pursuits. The circumstance which I allude to is this: by the study of mathematics the mind is abstracted from, and elevated above sensible matter. She is made familiar with the laws of reason, whose dictates she learns implicitly to obey. She has the delight of investigating the harmony of proportions, and she enjoys the gratification arising from the comparison, and the beautiful coincidence of ideas. By the impression which the mind receives from these, and other contemplations, which this study gives birth to or awakens, the imagination is corrected and composed, the moral character is expanded and confirmed, and the understanding is enlarged and stimulated

to the attainment of objects still more sublime.

In all other studies the mind is frequently distracted by diversity of opinion; hence controversies arise and her tranquillity is destroyed. But in mathematics its axioms, and the truths which are built upon them, are indisputable. All contrariety of sentiment on the truth of a mathematical proposition being impossible, there is no room for the display or exertion of angry or malignant passions, for rivalry or ambition; any farther than in the search after truth, it may be an object of ambition to be the first to find her out; but when once found out and discovered, all contest and controversy are at an end. Mathematical truth shines by her own intrinsic light; no

sophistry can disguise or obscure her, no perversion of argument can rob us of the conviction of her existence.

And yet it was the opinion of no less a man than the late Bishop WARBURTON, that, *if any thing were to be got by it*, there are those who would not scruple to deny, with the most unblushing effrontery, the truth of the plainest demonstration in EUCLID. Of the justness of this opinion who can doubt, after recollecting the pertinacity with which the enemies to the abolition of the slave-trade, and perhaps to other self-evident truths which at different times have been brought forward, have endeavoured to defend and maintain their unfounded and-mischievous assertions?



LETTER XXIV.



My dear Lord,

I AM much flattered by the pleasure my last letter seems to have afforded you. Should your Lordship persevere, as I have no doubt you will do, in your determination to study mathematics, it will have rendered you an essential service in directing your attention to a very important branch of liberal education. In this letter a subject will be

started which has still higher claims to your regard.

As man gradually advanced in the knowledge of arts, science, and literature, he of course found the sphere of his enjoyments proportionably enlarged. In addition to the mere comforts of the body, and the augmented indulgences of animal life, he acquired the capacity of relishing the refinements of social intercourse, and of duly appreciating their value and importance. Nor did his progress or his acquisitions stop here: whatever was within the possible grasp of unassisted human reason, he was enabled to make his own. The treasures of intellect were laid open to him. The principal of these treasures I have noticed in my former letter. But he advanced still further.

Truths, which lay not within the reach of mathematical demonstration, he attempted to investigate, with a felicity of conjecture which never has been exceeded. Those who are conversant with the writings of the ancient philosophers, particularly with the writings of PLATO (an author with whom, when once you are introduced to him, I prophesy you will be delighted,) will perceive that I am alluding to their sublime conceptions of the Supreme Being, and of the nature of the human soul.

Still, however, man's knowledge was incomplete; as the effectual means of promoting his happiness were yet unknown. To remedy this imperfection of human knowledge, and to unfold and spread abroad the terms of human happiness, are the express purposes of revealed religion.

Revealed religion points out to us the relations which we stand in to our fellow-creatures, and to our creator; the duties which in each relation are required of us; and the rewards or punishments which we are to expect in another state of existence, accordingly as those duties have been fulfilled or neglected in this.

In revealed religion there are two objects which demand our attention,—its precepts and its doctrines. Its doctrines are the object principally, though not altogether, of our belief; its precepts of our reason. So plain and intelligible are its precepts, that reason has no hesitation in assenting to them. Their truth and justness, indeed, are so obvious as to admit of no controversy. They carry with them an irresistible force and convic-

tion, similar to that of a mathematical theorem.

On the other hand, the doctrines of religion admitting, on many points, a latitude of interpretation, it is impossible, from the very nature of the human mind, that all men should think of them alike. This unavoidable diversity of opinion, which is neither criminal in those who indulge it, nor injurious to those whose opinions are dissented from, has been an inexhaustible source, not merely of dispute, but of war and bloodshed. How frequently have the blessings of the Gospel been most outrageously counteracted, by squabbles as unimportant as the dissensions between the big and little-èndian egg-eaters in Lilliput!

Of this unaccountable propensity in mankind, to become partisans and to quarrel on subjects the most unessential, or which they least understand, factious and ambitious knaves well know how to avail themselves. It is a never-failing engine to which unprincipled men resort. If once they get the direction of it (and an unmeaning watch-word will frequently obtain it for them) they may set common sense and rational argument at defiance; at least till such time as their mischievous or sinister purposes are answered. That this has been the case, almost ever since the Christian religion was first established down to the present day, any one may be convinced, who will look back into the history of past times, or will cast his eye over what is going forward, in one quarter or other, even now.

Gloomy and desponding moralists are for ever representing the present age as more immoral and irreligious than the last. On this subject I have my doubts. Nay, there is one argument which might be adduced to prove that this is, without exception, the most religious and pious period in the annals of Britain! The argument is briefly this:—If religion and piety were not in general practice and esteem, where would be the advantage in counterfeiting them? I will then ask, When was there a time in which it might with greater propriety be proclaimed than in the present, “Beware of counterfeits, for many are abroad?” Or when was there a time in which cant and hypocrisy more prevailed than at this moment? The most unblushing retailer of party lies, the grossest libeller that ever

merited a horsewhip, does not now scruple to pass off his impudent fabrications with the most sanctimonious asseverations of his veracity, and of his pious concern for the interests of Religion! But after all, I fear my argument may be turned against myself. It may be said, that it is the scarcity of the *circulating medium* which gives currency to its base and counterfeit resemblance.

Though perhaps not actual dealers in this counterfeit coin of religion, like those who have been just hinted at, there are few who are greater violators of christian charity than the class of “sturdy polemics;” an irritable race, whose chief occupation and delight seems to be in bandying about hard names, and in giving vent to the atrabilious accu-

mulation of their fanatical zeal, by pious altercation. These disturbers of religious peace have a singular propensity to set well-meaning people together by the ears; at the same time they furnish matter of triumph to the infidel scoffer, who cannot but be delighted to see the champions of the true faith (for *the true faith* is what both sides are contending for) exhausting their coarse artillery upon each other, and wasting their idle strength in struggling for the laurels of victory which neither deserves, nor probably will obtain. It is to little purpose that they belabour each other so unmercifully. During the violence of contention truth is totally lost sight of. Error is never put to flight by controversial argument; neither is unanimity restored between contending parties, nor their tempers

conciliated, by polemical discussion. The agitation of the waves serves only to keep the noxious particles suspended and afloat. It is not till the contending elements have exhausted their fury, that the feculence subsides, and the current is permitted to glide on pure and uninterrupted in its course.

That, which to the infidel is matter of triumph or diversion, cannot but occasion to the sincere and liberal minded believer serious concern. He will as naturally turn with disgust and indignation from these exhibitions of theological pugilism, as a man of an elegant and feeling mind would from *a set to* between GULLEY and the GAME CHICKEN.

You must observe, however, my dear Friend, that it is the manner in which these contests are usually carried on and discussed, not the discussion itself, that I would reprobate.

Controversy, when conducted with urbanity and candour, is the most efficacious way of bringing the truth of opinion to the test. The friendly collision of ingenuous minds seldom fails to produce some sparks, at least, of light, on subjects even the most obscure.

I should advise, however, (could I suppose that your Lordship stood in this case in need of an adviser) that, in the momentous business under consideration, you would for the present go only to the foun-

tain-head for your information; that you would study the sacred writings, certainly with more serious attention, yet in the same manner as you would any other book of instruction, of which you were desirous to gain a verbal and critical knowledge. When you meet with a passage, which, after a patient investigation of it, you do not fully comprehend, leave it for future consideration. In the progress of your reading, you may possibly meet with collateral passages, that may clear up the difficulty which you had been contending with, and supply you with the sense of that which before was unintelligible. Should this, however, not prove to be the case, you must, at a proper interval, resume the investigation. It will often happen, in endeavouring to find out the meaning of a difficult passage, that we fall into a

wrong train of ideas at the first starting, and get intangled in a labyrinth of thought, from which we are not able, at the time, to extricate ourselves. Perhaps the very next time we take up the subject, a different set of images and ideas being uppermost in our minds, a clue presents itself to us almost at once, and, as it were, spontaneously, furnishing us with the solution of what we were in search of, without farther difficulty.

By such a mode of study as is here recommended, you will acquire a habit of thinking for yourself, an independence of mind, which will permit you neither to be *led* nor *mis-led* by the opinions of others, on a subject on which every man should form his own.

Your Lordship must not, however, imagine that I am recommending to you to trust solely to your own conceptions, or to acquiesce in the first impressions left upon your mind by solitary unassisted study. This would be strangely to undervalue the accumulated knowledge and wisdom of eighteen centuries.

When you meet with any thing, of which you have not the fullest and most unequivocal conviction, you ought certainly to call in the assistance of those commentators who have attempted to elucidate the passage which wants to be explained. If, as it will often happen, the same passage is differently explained by different commentators, your own understanding must in that case decide for you to which interpre-

tation you ought to give the preference. I say nothing on the propriety of consulting on these occasions your preceptor, or any other learned friend or relation whom you may have the opportunity of applying to, as it is too obvious to be insisted upon.

Even on those points on which you are most decided, and on which, as it may appear to you at the time, you have completely made up your mind, it will not be safe to rely entirely on your own judgment. By dispassionately comparing and collating your own opinions with the opinions of others, your judgment will be rectified, or confirmed; if rectified, your mind cannot fail to be enriched with fresh stores of knowledge and wisdom; and if confirmed, the stores which you have already collected

will have additional value in your estimation by finding their value acknowledged by others. In short, you will in either case be benefited and instructed: if your judgment has been erroneous, its errors may be removed; if its decisions are established and confirmed, you will then know and feel, that on the sentiments which you have embraced you may repose with confidence.

I am, my dear Lord, &c.

SONNET XXIV.

RELIGION.

BENIGHTED Ignorance her joyless way

Thro' darkness long had groped ; at length arose

The sun of science, and around her throws

The cheering light of his pervading ray—

This but the prelude of a brighter day !

For lo, RELIGION next her radiance shows !

She comes, man's future prospects to disclose,

And life and immortality display !

Our thoughts, no longer chained, 'tis hers to rear

Above this grovelling earth's diurnal sphere ;

The soul, prepared for her eternal race,
She bears along where mercy dwells on high ;
Devotion's wing she plumes, directs her eye
To seek with trembling awe THE THRONE OF
GRACE !

THE END.

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